Rice University
School of Architecture
Houston Architecture ARCH 311/611

Fall 2015
AH 117

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Introduction:
Houston is a fascinating, but also profoundly dismaying, American city, where architectural landmarks are casually demolished so they can be replaced by new instruments of profit production that are architecturally abysmal—or simply because a building owner has decided that a landmark has outlived its usefulness.

What has prompted Houstonians to commission outstanding architects to produce major building projects locally yet oppose adoption of a zoning ordinance, the most fundamental legal instrument of urban space management in the United States?

This course examines these conditions and questions by putting them in the critical historical context of Houston's urban and architectural development.

Course description and objectives:
The course consists of a series of illustrated lectures and walking tours that describe and analyze the architectural history of Houston. The basis of the lectures is a chronological account of the development of the city from its founding in 1836 to the present. Characteristic building types and exceptional works of architecture are identified for each period within the city's development. Notable architects who worked in Houston are also identified and the evolution of the practice of architecture is profiled. Walking tours acquaint class members with outstanding buildings and educate them in developing an awareness of the historical dimension of urban sites.

Tour note: On scheduled tour days, a tour will be postponed if weather conditions make walking outdoors inadvisable. Should a tour be postponed, class will be held instead. The tour will automatically be transferred to the next class session. You may telephone the instructor at ext. 3378 or e-mail me at <sfox@rice.edu> to confirm postponements when weather is threatening.

Students registered in both 311 and 611 sections are required to perform two assignments.

1. One is a written paper comparatively analyzing two urban spaces in Houston. This should contain 1,000 words of text (approximately 5 double-spaced, printed pages). It should address perceptible phenomena (visual appearance, micro-climate, feel, smell, and sound), design intentions, and historical evolution. The text may be accompanied by drawings or other illustrations. The purpose of this assignment is to stimulate reflection on how places are made (or fail to cohere, or are unmade) in the city, and examine and evaluate the efficacy of conscious design in the formation of urban places. This assignment is due on **10 November**.

The two sites to be compared are: (1) the hill in McGovern Centennial Gardens in Hermann Park, and (2) the hill at Miller Outdoor Theater in Hermann Park.

2. The second assignment is the presentation to the class of an illustrated lecture on the architectural history of the place that each student is from. The presentation should be 20 minutes in length (this is equivalent to 10 double-spaced, printed pages). The material presented in the lecture is to be documented in a research paper that should include footnotes and a bibliography, due on the day of the presentation.

The purpose of this assignment is to use architecture to interpret the development of cities (and suburbs and rural places) historically. Therefore, simply listing buildings and identifying them by date and architect is not as important as understanding how buildings and places embody and re-present episodes in a community's historical experience.

Note: Students who are from Houston should address the architectural history of their neighborhoods.

Presentations should address such issues as:
(1) the origin and development of the community
(2) the major periods of its architectural evolution
(3) the major architects who practiced in the community, as well as works by well-known architects built in the community
(4) the major architectural monuments in the community
(5) building types and settlement patterns that are characteristic of the community
(6) the present status of the community and an evaluation of its architectural heritage

Sources of Information on the history of communities and their architectural heritage

(1) architectural histories and architectural guidebooks about cities, states, and nations
(2) US and foreign architecture periodicals. One may consult *The Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals* (on-line), *The Architectural Index*, and the *Architectural Periodicals Index* (this is international in scope).
(3) monographs on the works of individual architects and individual buildings
(4) books and periodicals on the history of US and foreign cities
(5) local public libraries or university libraries, which may contain special collections and historical archives of local material
(6) local, regional, or state historical societies or preservation organizations
(7) cultural attachés of foreign consulates or foreign embassies in Washington DC

Grading policy for **Arch 311**:
Sixty percent of the grade is determined by performance on Assignment II, thirty percent by performance on Assignment I, and ten percent on attendance and participation.

3. **Students registered in the 611 section** will perform a third assignment. This is an architectural-historical analysis of a Houston building of the student's choice. This is to be a written paper containing a minimum of 1,000 words of text. The paper is to be based on research about the history of a Houston building and its architect. The question your paper should answer is: How does this building relate to the history of architecture: locally, regionally, nationally, internationally? Such sources as the *Houston Architectural Guide*, *Houston: An Architectural Guide*, the Texas Historical Commission's Texas Atlas website, which has on-line transcriptions of National Register properties in Harris County, and *Cite: The Architecture and Design Review of Houston* may be consulted to choose a building to analyze. The purpose of this paper is to place a building in its architectural-historical context both locally and with respect to broader currents of architectural history. This assignment is due **3 November**.

In completing this assignment students will exercise their research, writing, and critical interpretive skills to understand how works of architecture respond simultaneously to local circumstance and broadly diffused cultural trends.

Grading policy for **Arch 611**:
Grading criteria: Fifty percent of the grade is determined by performance on Assignment II, twenty-five percent by performance on Assignment I, and twenty-five percent by performance on Assignment III.

Absence policy:
Students are expected to attend all classes for the full class session.

Expectations regarding course work and Honor Code:
It is not acceptable to reproduce other authors' texts from websites, books, or articles. Use of external sources is permissible when properly credited. Both assignments are covered by the Rice Honor Code.

Students with a disability requiring accommodation are encouraged to contact the instructor as well as Disability Support services in Allen Center: http://dss.rice.edu/

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25 Aug Lecture--Hesperos, 1836-1873
27 Aug Lecture--New South, 1873-1900 Submit topic for Assignment II and III (III for 611 only)

1 Sept Lecture--Progressive Houston I, 1900-1920
3 Sept Tour--Downtown: Original Townsite (meet at Market Square, Travis and Congress, 1:05 PM)

8 Sept Lecture--Progressive Houston II
10 Sept Tour--Streetcar Suburbs (meet at Garrott and Westmoreland, 1:05 PM)

15 Sept Tour--Houston's Cradle of Culture (meet at south front of Museum of Fine Arts, Main and Montrose, 1:05 PM))
17 Sept Lecture--Roaring Twenties I, 1920-1930 Submit Outline and Bibliography, Assnmt II

22 Sept Tour--Garden Suburbs (meet at south entrance to Cullen Sculpture Garden, Bissonnet btwn Montrose and Main, 1:05 PM)
24 Sept Visit the two sites to be compared for Assnmt. I: (1) the hill in McGovern Centennial Gardens in Hermann Park, and (2) the hill at Miller Outdoor Theater in Hermann Park.

29 Sep Lecture--Roaring Twenties II. Submit Outline and Bibliography, Assnmt III
1 Oct Lecture—New Deal, 1930-1945

6 Oct Tour—University of Houston (meet at Cullen Family Plaza entrance to Ezekiel Cullen Bldg., 1:10 PM; metered visitor parking in Lot 16 F, accessible from Entr 16 on Cullen Blvd and Entr 18 on Elgin Ave) facing Fine Arts Building http://www.uh.edu/maps/.
8 Oct Lecture--Postwar Planning, 1945-1952 Submit Draft Text, Assnmt II

13 Oct Mid Term Recess
15 Oct Visit the two sites to be compared for Assnmt. I: (1) the hill in McGovern Centennial Gardens in Hermann Park, and (2) the hill at Miller Outdoor Theater in Hermann Park.

20 Oct Lecture—The New World, 1952-1960

22 Oct Tour--Texas Medical Center (meet at George Hermann Statue, Fannin and Cambridge, 1:05 PM)

27 Oct Lecture--Space City, 1960-1973
29 Oct Tour- Central Houston (meet at front entrance to Julia Ideson Library, 550 McKinney btwn Smith and Bagby, 1:05 PM)

3 Nov Lecture—Golden Buckle of the Sunbelt. Due date for Assignment III
5 Nov Lecture—0 Zone

10 Nov Class Presentations, Assignment II, Due date for Assignment I
12 Nov Class presentations, Assignment II
17 Nov Class presentations, Assignment II
19 Nov Class presentations, Assignment II
24 Nov Class presentations, Assignment II
26 Nov Thanksgiving
1 Dec (Jury Week—no classes in School of Architecture)
3 Dec (Jury Week—no classes in School of Architecture)